



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

**SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CHINESE IN AMERICA.**

BY STEWART CULIN.

An interesting fact connected with Chinese immigration is the systematic way in which it has proceeded, whatever has been its direction. Its pioneers have always noted the opportunities for their countrymen, and been followed by others, when circumstances were favorable, until the demand for their labor was supplied. A Chinaman, too, never abandons a profitable location without making arrangements for one of his relatives or friends to succeed him, and it is a matter of constant inquiry among the Chinese in the United States to find a new place where they or their fellows can better their fortunes. They are eager to learn of England; they discuss the possibilities of Mexico and South America, while the population of every American city is known to them, and even the smallest towns are canvassed in the hope of discovering another foothold for one of their people. It may be said that the distribution of the Chinese in the United States is less influenced by mere chance or the agency of exterior forces than that of any other class of emigrants. Intelligent coöperation and self-direction have been the means of accomplishing what popular opinion, in default of better reason, attributes to slavish allegiance to the "Six Companies" of San Francisco.

I have frequently been urged to go to China, or at least visit the Pacific coast, to study the Chinese; but, while the field of my observation has been confined entirely to the cities of this seaboard, I have felt no lack of material and often profited by the conditions that are regarded as unfavorable. I have seen the founding and development of several Chinese colonies, and watched their growth from a handful of timid laundrymen into organized communities of several thousand souls. It is of their beginnings, organization, and development that I desire to speak in the present paper.

The Chinese laborers in the United States all come from the immediate vicinity of the city of Canton. They describe themselves as the "people of the soil," as opposed to the Hakkás or foreigners, emigrants from Fuhkien province, who settled in Kwantung some centuries ago. They all speak the Canton dialect, but have a number

of local patois, according to their village or district. They divide themselves into the people of the Sám Yup, "Three Towns," and the people of the Sz' Yup, "Four Towns," after an old tradition that conveys more than matter of geographical relation. There is a hostile feeling between the Sám Yup and Sz' Yup people.

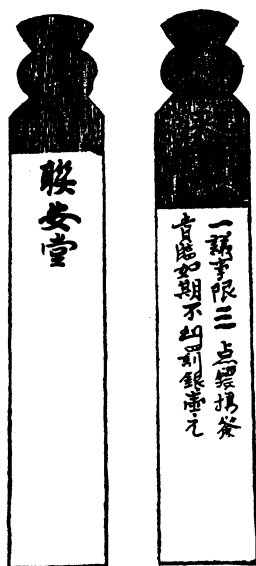
They belong to a number of clans or families, which are indicated by their surnames. Three or four of these preponderate and outnumber all the others, as in China, where three-fourths of the entire population belong to three or four of the several hundred families. There are few people from Canton, Hong Kong, or, in fact, any of the cities, among them. They are almost without exception peasants, tillers of the soil, villagers who lived as their ancestors had done—governed by their village elders, subject to the head of their family—and so remote from foreign influences that even clocks and watches were almost unknown, and their village watchmen burned incense through the night to tell the hour.

It is now more than ten years ago since I made my first acquaintance with the Chinese laborer. He was a laundryman, one of the pioneers, the first indeed to establish himself in the city of Philadelphia. His name was Lee Fong, familiarly Ah Lee—an angular hollow-cheeked man, whose picture as he appeared in his better clothes is more like the portrait of a corpse than that of a human being. Through his kindly influence (for in spite of his dolorous appearance and equally doleful speech and manners he was a very kind-hearted man) I made my first studies in Chinese ways. Other Chinese laundrymen had established themselves in the city, and I had already visited his "cousin," a laundryman who supplied his countrymen with opium and Chinese tea and incense, when one day he told me that a restaurant was to be established. It was the first step towards the consolidation of the little colony. The following Sunday the restaurant was opened on the floor over the laundry, where the vender of tea and incense divided his time between his scales and his flat-iron. This place soon became the acknowledged center of the Chinese in Philadelphia. On Sundays and Mondays it would be packed with Chinamen, and the strains of the Chinese fiddle could be heard over the never-ending click of the dominoes, from midday to midnight. It was here the feud arose. It was here the memorable meeting of the Moy family was held. Here indeed the colony began its history. I cannot quite recall when my doleful friend told me the Lees were

to have a shop. The Lees had abandoned their former meeting place and left the Moys in possession since the quarrel, and now they were to have a shop of their own. Lee Tong had been brought from New York city as "manager," and many of the Lees had taken shares. I can well recall the delight I had in the little store. A week scarcely passed before I made an inventory of its stock, from the fossil-crabs, used as medicine for sore eyes, to the dried prawns and salted olives in the great earthen crocks by the wall. The mild-featured shop-keeper would put on his great rimmed glasses and pore over a book, while I, a privileged person, would recline on the mat behind the peep-hole, in the little apartment back of the shop, and watch all that happened. The shop-keeper was the factotum of the colony. He acted as its banker and its letter-writer. It was he that drew up money-orders and copied in a round hand the English addresses on outgoing letters. He was the postmaster, too, and like some of his official brethren in the rural districts, would let every one help himself. Moreover, he was the apothecary, and compounded the long Chinese medical prescriptions that were brought to him with alarming frequency, with scrupulous care. He himself had written the prescriptions, as I afterwards learned. Besides, he maintained the dignity of the colony, especially in its relations with the outside world. Even the policeman was respectful in addressing him, and he was always spoken of by Americans as Mr. Expansive Harmony, from the name of the shop, of which he was regarded as the wealthy proprietor. Yet my new friend was only an employé of the coöperative store, receiving a salary of thirty dollars per month, the wages of a common laundryman—the uniform wages, in fact, of the Chinese laborers on the eastern coast. As years went on he grew tired of his long expatriation and went home to China, and others in turn succeeded him—all just as kind, sensible, and polite as he had been.

It was not long before I discovered that my intimacy brought its responsibilities. While I was invited to the feast on the last night of the year, when the family came together to solemnly worship before the shrine of the Three Starry Sages, and became so closely identified with the family that I knew its innermost secrets, I also became identified with its feud. What mattered it now that I had found out about the little squares of stamped paper that fluttered down daily from the loft above shop, and daily made a stir in the little com-

munity, or could read the inviting labels on the gambling-houses along the street? The shop was not alone now. Red-paper labels fluttered on all the houses nearly, and the "street" had undergone a transformation from the real common-place residences into one of mysterious mansions, which were spoken of in the newspapers as "dens." It may be unwise to tell that gambling was its chief enterprise and the sentinels in every doorway pointed to a state of siege that verily existed, for foreign laws and internal strife made vigilance the price of existence. The feud grew apace. At first the



Lees received so many additions to their number that they became strong and fearless, and then I first heard of the I' Hing. The name was never spoken above a whisper. I was cautioned never to talk of it. The armory of the shop was replenished. Men would go home at night in companies. Life in the colony became burdensome. The I' Hing, the "Patriotic Rising," the Triad Society of unhappy memory, had been established in Philadelphia and recruited among the Moy family, and the ignorant Sâm Yup people had united all the enemies and rivals of the Lees in combination against them. The story of the feud will never be known

to the outer world, if, indeed, the world cared to hear it. Its true origin is lost in remote antiquity. From time to time a truce would be declared. Valuable financial interests were at stake. The merchants, the chief sufferers, formed a guild. The accompanying figure represent two of their notices of a meeting. They are wooden tablets  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, inscribed on one side with the name of the "Hall," as such organizations are designated, and on the other the names of the particular shops to which they were directed. Below is written the hour of the meeting, with a statement that a penalty of one dollar will be imposed for non-attendance. These tablets, one for each member, were kept by a person designated for the purpose, and any member of the guild who had a grievance would repair to him and direct him to call a meeting. The custodian, being duly paid the sum of one dollar or more to pay for tobacco at the meeting, would inscribe on the *Chim í sz'*, as the tablets are called, the hour of the assembly, &c., as here appears, and carry them to different shops. The tablets formed the credentials of their representatives, who laid them upon a table upon entering the room. Such assemblies are for the express purpose of "arranging affairs." Both sides tell their story, and the others endeavor to bring about a settlement. The meetings are not of a judicial character. The methods employed are based entirely upon Chinese custom, no consideration being given to the foreign law, concerning which the Chinese are equally ignorant and indifferent. When a laundry or shop is sold, the seller must place a notice on the doorway, stating that a change has taken place in the ownership, and that the payment of the money will take place at such a time on a given day. This is done that creditors may claim their dues, and the buyer must take care that the custom is complied with, as otherwise he is held responsible for the unpaid debts of the former owner. This may serve as an illustration of the Chinese mercantile usages, which are strongly enforced by public sentiment in the Chinese communities.

I have dwelt at some length in a former paper on the exhibitions of the religious sentiment among the Chinese in our eastern cities. A death seems to develop it, and the ghost becomes the object of daily propitiation. The deified heroes of the native pantheon are worshiped here, but the ghosts command the stronger emotions of fear and sympathy.

Turning from the colony in Philadelphia to the larger and more highly organized community in New York city, it may be interesting to note the occupations of its inhabitants and their various guilds, clubs, and trades unions. Coöperation, it will be observed, its conspicuous everywhere. They buy their wares at a coöperative shop; they eat at a coöperative restaurant; they borrow money from coöperative, societies and when they die a coöperative society carries their bones back to China and buries them. First in point of numbers in New York city are the laundrymen. They have a union that fixes prices uniformly and arranges disputes, with an agent who constantly travels over the city and endeavors to maintain harmony.

Next in number to the laundrymen come the cigar-makers, all of whom arrive here by the way of Cuba, and usually speak a little Spanish. They too have their trade union.

After the cigar-makers come the gambling-house keepers, with their society, a more or less secret organization.

Then the merchants, who have a guild entitled the "Chinese Public Hall." The custodian of this hall is elected annually and acts as peacemaker in the community.

These comprise all the trade organizations, though far from including all the trades and occupations that are centered in the Chinese colony in Mott street. Cooks, barbers, tailors, fortune-tellers, carpenters, painters, not to speak of physicians and venders of fruit, swell the number. Two-thirds of the inhabitants are enrolled in the I'Hing, the revolutionary secret society. Three of the families or clans have an association for mutual protection, and this guild, the secret society, and the merchants each have a hall more or less handsomely decorated and containing a shrine of the god of war. Coöperation is seen to extend even to religious observances, for the shrine serves chiefly as a convenience for fortune-telling, to the members of the guild. To summarize the elements of social organization among the Chinese of whom I have spoken, we find: First, the *clan* and the *village*, representing family and early association; the *secret society* or political combination, and the *trade guild* or mercantile coöperation. Corresponding with these are the laundry, the shop and the gambling-house, which may be associated with the clan and the village, and the guild hall, with the political and mercantile combinations.